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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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**THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION**

Religion is gaining in popularity in Czechoslovakia in spite of the measures taken by the Communist Party to discourage the people from all religious activity.

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all denominations were equally disliked by the government and that no particular church held a favored position. It sometimes might have appeared that the government regarded the National Czechoslovak Church more favorably than the Catholic Church but [ ] this was because of the personality of [ ] its leader, [ ] Hromadka, and not because of the ideology of the Church.<sup>1</sup> The remaining Protestant churches were rather insignificant because of the small number of participants. It was [ ] that the various religious sects followed independent programs for survival and were not drawn together as a result of Communist persecution. [ ]

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[redacted] a Commissioner was appointed to the Brno Catholic Church Diocese. This Commissioner actually performed all the activities of the Brno Episcopate, i.e. granting dispensations for marriages, etc. [redacted]

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that in 1950, virtually all monasteries were abolished and the monks were concentrated in Bohosudov (N 50-41, E 13-52). In 1953 they were transferred to the only remaining monastery which was located in Velehrad (N 49-06, E 17-24). They were not forced to

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perform any type of work. [redacted] nuns, [redacted] continued to work as nurses in special mental hospitals. However, there were no longer any sister-nurses in most of the general hospitals.

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3. [redacted] church attendance had been increasing gradually since 1949 [redacted]

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[redacted] More students took part in religious instruction in schools at that time than had participated prior to the Communist coup in 1948. This was particularly noteworthy because religious lessons were not obligatory and took place after the regular school hours. To enroll students in the classes, the students' parents had to submit an application which they themselves delivered to the school principal. The principal was obliged to attempt to persuade the parents to withdraw the application. Also, a very short period of time -- only two or three days -- was allotted for submitting the application. In spite of these chicaneries, the nation-wide number of students attending classes in religion increased considerably. On the other hand, in schools where religious instruction was mandatory prior to the Communist coup a slight decrease of students was noted. Students also attended religious services to a greater extent than they did prior to 1948.

4. Beginning in 1952, teachers were placed under pressure to cease practicing their religion. Each teacher was summoned to the school supervisor in his area and encouraged to sign a statement renouncing his church membership. If a teacher refused to sign, he was compelled to prepare a long written explanation setting forth his reasons for declining to relinquish his membership in the church.

5. In contrast to the students, a lack of interest in religion was apparent among most of the working youth. [redacted] this was due to the fact that they were educated in apprentice homes where they were subject to strong Communist indoctrination. However, not all of the working youth were apathetic to religion. [redacted] the family as a unit had, and will continue to have, a decisive influence on the religious beliefs of the youth of Czechoslovakia. [redacted] as far as the CSM was concerned, this organization exerted only a very slight influence on both the working youth and the students.

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6. Periodically, general public lectures were held in every city under the leadership of a so-called "People's University." These lectures, which dealt with other subjects as well as religion, were organized by the former Komensky Academy. [redacted] The lectures regarding religion fell into two basic categories. The first was of a definitely anti-religious character and was easily recognized as such. The second was of a more scientific nature discussing such subjects as the origin and development of mankind and was presented in a manner which tended to negate existing religious concepts. Still another type of anti-religious lecture was sponsored by the People's University. It dealt primarily with the position of the Vatican and its relation to Czechoslovakia. [redacted]

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general public lectures dealing indirectly with religion were continued.

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7. As far as the Communist Party itself was concerned, that the end of 1953 was the last time that pressure was applied against a Party member to give up his church affiliation.

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1953 was a turning point and that the relaxation in the government toward religion coincided with a slight overall change in the Regime's technique.

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the Communist Regime was not actually compelled to relax its pressure. Regime control over the people is so tight that the government cannot actually be forced into anything. this relaxation toward religion as a change in technique for imposing the Regime's policies.

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